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REMARKS

This Amendment and Response is submitted in reply to the Office Action mailed December 29, 2005, in which pending claims 1-5 and 7-38 were allowed and claims 39 and 40 rejected. New claims 41-59 have been added. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this application.

Claims 39 and 40 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112(1) as failing to comply with the written description requirement. In particular, it is asserted that the recitation of a "processor" is not found in the original disclosure. The drawings were also objected to for failing to disclose the claimed processor.

Applicants direct the Examiner's attention to the processor 70 illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 and to page 8, line 5 through page 9, line 4, reproduced below:

Processor 70 receives input data, processes that data and communicates with a central source of compressed air 68 in response. In the illustrated embodiment, the processor has a digital display, incorporating touch screen capabilities. Processor 70 is adapted to receive, process and communicate to the traction apparatus almost any relevant treatment data, including the type of force (e.g. static or intermittent), force ramp up and ramp down times, force hold and rest times, magnitude of hold and rest forces, and treatment times. Optionally, the processor 70 is adapted to automatically adjusting the table height and/or pitch movement of the apparatus, as well as a patient control switch adapted to terminate treatment. As used herein, "processor" refers to any of a variety of general purpose or special purpose programmable computing devices, such as for example a PC or a programmable logic controller. In one embodiment, the processor 70 is a separate stand-alone computer, such as a PC.

The processor 70 can also store and retrieve pre-programmed traction protocols. For example, the therapist may develop a protocol for a particular patient that can be applied multiple time over the course of treatment. This protocol can be stored in the processor 70 for future use. A protocol can include any of the treatment variable available in the processor 70, including without limitation the type of force (e.g. static or intermittent), force ramp up and ramp down times, force hold and rest times, magnitude of hold and rest forces, and treatment times. The processor 70 also preferably assigns an index number or title to each protocol so that they can be easily retrieved. In another embodiment, the therapist generates a treatment protocol off-line on a separate computer system, such as a PC. The protocol is then uploaded to the processor 70 using conventional computer communication protocols and techniques, such as an RS-232 connection. This embodiment permits the treatment protocol to be sent electronically to other clinics at which the patient can receive

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treatment. One method of electronically transmitting a treatment protocol is using electronic mail over the Internet.

Further discussion of the processor 70 is found on page 13, lines 8-18 of the specification.

Prior to beginning therapy, a treatment protocol can be entered into processor 70 to facilitate some or all of the therapeutic steps. In a preferred embodiment, processor 70 provides a touch control screen to assist a health care professional in entering the treatment protocol. Data input such as the mode of lumbar treatment (e.g. static or intermittent), force ramp up time, force ramp down time, hold time, rest time, rest force, maximum force, and treatment time can all be entered to create a desired treatment protocol. The processor 70 communicates with the power source (in the illustrated embodiment the source of compressed air 68) to power the actuators 56, 66, 128 and to provide the designated movement between the first body supporting portion, second body supporting portions, and/or the head supporting portion 14, 16, 120.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed processor has been disclosed and illustrated in compliance with 35 U.S.C. 112(1).

Support for the new claims 41-44 is found in the specification on page 6, lines 11-14 of the specification:

In another embodiment, the securing system 20 can be a Velcro® or other high friction surface on the body supporting surfaces 14, 16 with or without belts 30 and 32, pelvic and/or thoracic harnesses, pegs, binders or any combination of these devices.

Support for new claim 45 is found in the specification on page 7, lines 20-22.

Any type of suitable actuator can be used, including a pneumatic actuator, hydraulic actuator, rack and pinion structures, linear motors, worm gear, solenoids, and the like.

Support for new claim 46 is found in the specification on page 3, lines 8-13.

The present invention provides a multi-axis traction device that is capable of treating back pain for a patient with postural deformities that hinder the traditional application of longitudinal traction force along the spine. The present traction device isolates and concentrates traction force on specific areas of the body, for example the lumbar region, without applying the force along the entirety of the patient's body.

Support for new claims 47-57 is found in the specification on page 5, lines 1-10.

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The present invention provides a therapeutic apparatus for treating a patient suffering from back pain. The apparatus is adapted to exert a therapeutic traction force on a patient's spine to relieve pressures on structures that may be causing pain. The apparatus is further capable of producing the forces and positions required to cause decompression of the intervertebral discs, that is, unloading due to distraction and positioning. The apparatus provided by the present invention can be used to treat many conditions, including, but not limited to back pain, neck pain, herniated disc, protruding disc, degenerative disc disease, posterior facet syndrome and sciatica.

New claims 58 and 59 generally correspond to mean-plus-function versions of claims 1 and 40.

Applicant has enclosed a fee payment for the newly recited claims. If this fee payment is incorrect (or any other fee is required to enter this paper) the Commissioner is authorized to adjust our Deposit Account 06-0029 and is requested to notify us of such an adjustment.

Respectfully Submitted,

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